Section I

Understanding the Problem and Addressing Denial
What Does Abuse/Addiction Mean to Me?

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. To increase the client’s awareness of his or her patterns of substance use.
2. To define the nature of the problem of substance abuse or addiction.
3. To help the client understand how the process of abuse/addiction has worked in his or her life.

TYPES OF PROBLEMS THIS EXERCISE MAY BE MOST USEFUL FOR

- Adult Children of Alcoholic (ACOA) Traits
- Blaming/Projection/Failure to Take Appropriate Responsibility
- Denial/Rationalization/Minimization of Substance-Abusing Behavior and/or Relapse Risk
- Generalized Treatment Resistance
- History of Self-Medication for Mood/Pain Problems
- Issues of Identity
- Learned Helplessness
- Living Environment Deficiencies (Relapse Triggers, Lack of Emotional Support, etc.)
- Low Self-Esteem
- Peer Group Negativity
- Post-acute Withdrawal
- Resistance Based on Distorted Beliefs about Substance Abuse/Dependence
- Shame Issues
- Substance Abuse
- Substance Dependence
- Substance Withdrawal
- Tendency to Repeated Relapse
- Treatment/Aftercare Noncompliance

Therapist’s Overview
WHAT DOES ABUSE/ADDICTION MEAN TO ME?

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH CLIENT

1. How have your thoughts changed regarding abuse and addiction?
2. How will this new insight assist you in making decisions related to the use of alcohol or other drugs?
3. How does this information about how substance abuse and addiction work change your views and expectations of yourself?
WHAT DOES ABUSE/ADDITION MEAN TO ME?

It is important for you to identify patterns of using and how your life events fit these patterns. This exercise will help you do so.

1. For each of the following symptoms, please write about whether this has happened in your life, and if it has, give an example.
   a. Tolerance (needing more of a chemical to get the same desired effect, or feeling less effect with the same amount):
      ____________________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________________
   b. Withdrawal (either experiencing withdrawal symptoms after stopping use, or using or drinking to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms):
      ____________________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________________
   c. Loss of control (using/drinking in larger amounts or for longer periods of time than you intended):
      ____________________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________________
   d. Attempts to control use (having a persistent desire or making efforts to control or cut down on your using/drinking, including making rules or bargains with yourself to limit it):
      ____________________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________________
   e. Time spent on use (getting the chemical, using it, or recovering from its effects):
      ____________________________________________________________
Exercise I.1

f. Sacrifices made for use (giving up or reducing social, work, family, or recreational activities that were important to you because using/drinking interfered with them):

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________


g. Use despite known suffering (continuing to use/drink despite knowing you had a physical or psychological problem that was caused or made worse by using/drinking):

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. Looking back over these symptoms, what do they tell you about your use of substances?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. For each of the following stages of drinking or drug use, please note whether you have experienced this, and if you have, give an example of how your life fits the description.

a. First stage: First experience, when people begin using a chemical and discover that they like the way the chemical makes them feel:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

b. Second stage: Tolerance and withdrawal appear, and people find that they can use the chemical to cope with situations or feelings that are difficult or uncomfortable:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
Exercise I.1

c. Third stage: People begin deliberately using the chemical to cope, and may try to cut down or control use; their normal life is disrupted and others start believing there’s a problem:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

d. Fourth stage: People feel that they cannot cope without the chemical and will pay whatever price comes with continued use; they feel a conflict between wanting to use versus not wanting to use; they feel trapped; life seems to be falling apart:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

4. Looking over these four phases of developing chemical dependence, what have you learned about your own pattern of use?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Remember to bring completed work sheet to your next appointment.
Problem Identification

**GOALS OF THE EXERCISE**

1. To assist clients in increasing their awareness of losses and problems associated with their use of alcohol and other drugs.
2. To increase readiness for change to avoid further problems brought on by or made worse by use of alcohol or other drugs.
3. To help clients become aware that there are self-destructive behaviors associated with their use of alcohol or other drugs; to personalize the effects on their lives.
4. To provide objective data about the impact of alcohol or other drug use or dependence.

**TYPES OF PROBLEMS THIS EXERCISE MAY BE MOST USEFUL FOR**

- Blaming/Projection/Failure to Take Appropriate Responsibility
- Denial/Rationalization/Minimization of Substance-Abusing Behavior and/or Relapse Risk
- Family Conflict
- General Interpersonal Relational Problems
- Generalized Treatment Resistance
- History of Self-Medication for Mood/Pain Problems
- Learned Helplessness
- Living Environment Deficiencies (Relapse Triggers, Lack of Emotional Support, etc.)
- Low Self-Esteem
- Peer Group Negativity
- Post-acute Withdrawal
- Resistance Based on Distorted Beliefs about Substance Abuse/Dependence
- Shame Issues
- Substance Abuse
- Substance Dependence
PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

- Substance Withdrawal
- Tendency to Repeated Relapse
- Treatment/Aftercare Noncompliance

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH CLIENT

1. What did you learn about your own level of use/abuse/dependence and life problems associated with use?
2. Do you see possible connections between problems that you thought were unrelated? If so, does this give you more hope of solving several other problems by working on this one?
PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

People don’t usually seek treatment or help until something forces them to ask themselves, “What got me here?”—in other words, until they encounter some kind of crisis. Crises are good motivators, but they go away, and people need to make decisions about using that will to carry them beyond the crisis. If you wonder whether you have a problem with alcohol or other drugs or how serious your problem is, compare the events in your life with each of the following categories.

1. Here is a brief list of common experiences that bring people who are using alcohol or other drugs to decide that they should stop their use of these substances, that their drinking or drug use is causing them problems, and that they need help. Check all that apply to you:

   * Loss of Important Relationships because of Drinking/Using
     - Divorce or equivalent
     - Alienation of children, parents, siblings
     - Loss of close friendships
     - Loss of respect from coworkers

   * Practical Difficulties Resulting from Drinking/Using
     - Unpayable debts
     - Legal problems (arrest, jail, probation, loss of driver’s license, etc.)
     - Loss of a home
     - Loss of employment
     - Loss of a vehicle
     - Loss of professional status

   * Dangerous/Harmful Situations Resulting from Drinking/Using
     - Health problems
     - DUls, DWls, or car wrecks
     - Work injuries, falls, or other accidents
     - Recreational accidents
     - Harm to others as a result of one’s own actions under the influence
     - Fights while under the influence or coming down
Exercise I.2

Things You Once Thought You'd Never Do

- Lying to partners/families
- Stealing from partners/families
- Abandoning partners/families
- Endangering others, especially children
- Breaking promises
- Letting down friends
- Abusing family members
- Exchanging sex for drugs or alcohol
- Letting down employers
- Selling drugs
- Committing crimes for substances

2. When you think, or thought in the past, about your life without alcohol or other drugs, what types of feelings do you or did you experience?

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

3. Do you see any other evidence that your use of alcohol or of other drugs is causing problems in your life? If you do, what is it?

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Remember to bring completed work sheet to your next appointment.
Where Am I?

**GOALS OF THE EXERCISE**

1. To normalize common stresses and changes newly sober people experience.
2. To assist clients in assessing what they are currently experiencing and give them some idea of what feelings, thoughts, and events they may experience during the process of change.
3. To help clients identify reasons why making changes will benefit them.

**TYPES OF PROBLEMS THIS EXERCISE MAY BE MOST USEFUL FOR**

- Anger Management
- Anxiety
- Appetite Disturbance
- Burnout
- Codependency
- Denial/Rationalization/Minimization of Substance-Abusing Behavior and/or Relapse Risk
- Depression
- Emotional Isolation
- General Interpersonal Relational Problems
- Generalized Treatment Resistance
- Hopelessness
- Inadequate Support Network
- Legal Problems
- Learned Helplessness
- Living Environment Deficiencies (Relapse Triggers, Lack of Emotional Support, etc.)
- Low Self-Esteem
- Mood Swings
- Peer Group Negativity
WHERE AM I?

- Post-acute Withdrawal
- Resistance Based on Distorted Beliefs about Substance Abuse/Dependence
- Shame Issues
- Sleep Disturbance
- Substance Abuse
- Substance Dependence
- Substance Withdrawal
- Tendency to Repeated Relapse
- Treatment/Aftercare Noncompliance

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH CLIENT

1. How will you cope with events that may happen as you continue in a nonusing lifestyle?
2. What events are you prepared to deal with?
3. Where might you need some assistance and where will you find it?
4. Ask about the client’s exercise in imagination from the end of the assignment.
WHERE AM I?

There are common patterns of events, thoughts, and feelings that newly sober people often experience as they change to a lifestyle that does not involve using alcohol or other drugs or engaging in other compulsive behaviors. This exercise will help you identify where you are in this process and what your current level of motivation is.

1. Following is a list of common events people experience. For each of the following, please write about whether this is happening or has happened to you, and if it has, give an example.

   a. Feeling physical changes in your body as it becomes free of alcohol/other drugs:
      ________________________________________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________

   b. Feelings of hope and exhilaration: ______________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________

   c. Feelings of letdown and fear: ______________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________

   d. Frustration: __________________________________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________

   e. Feeling more connected to other people: _____________________________
      ________________________________________________________________

   f. Loneliness: __________________________________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________

   g. Feeling strange or out of place: ______________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________

   h. Ongoing cravings, urges, thoughts of using/drinking: _________________
      ________________________________________________________________
Exercise I.3

i. Feeling doubtful or questioning self, spirituality, values, abilities: ____________________
____________________________________________________________________

j. Mood fluctuations: _____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. The reason I decided to get clean and sober now is: ____________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. I want to change these things about my life: _________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

4. Now we ask you to do an exercise in imagination: Picture yourself in the future, living a life free of any drug or harmful behavior you have been depending on. What alternative ways are you using in this life to react to difficult situations and uncomfortable feelings? As you picture yourself living this way, how does that image of yourself make you feel?
____________________________________________________________________

Remember to bring completed work sheet to your next appointment.
Understanding Family History

**GOALS OF THE EXERCISE**

1. To examine the influence of the client’s family of origin in the development and maintenance of substance-abusing behaviors and recovery.
2. To help the client to learn new ways to interact with his or her own family.
3. To help the client see that he or she can learn from the experiences of others.

**TYPES OF PROBLEMS THIS EXERCISE MAY BE MOST USEFUL FOR**

- Adult Children of Alcoholic (ACOA) Traits
- Anger Management
- Blaming/Projection/Failure to Take Appropriate Responsibility
- Borderline Traits
- Codependency
- Denial/Rationalization/Minimization of Substance-Abusing Behavior and/or Relapse Risk
- Depression
- Emotional Isolation
- Family Conflict
- General Interpersonal Relational Problems
- Inadequate Support Network
- Issues of Identity
- Learned Helplessness
- Living Environment Deficiencies (Relapse Triggers, Lack of Emotional Support, etc.)
- Low Self-Esteem
- Parent-Child Relational Problems
- Partner Relational Problems
- Poor Social Skills
- Posttraumatic Stress Issues
UNDERSTANDING FAMILY HISTORY

- Shame Issues
- Substance Abuse
- Substance Dependence
- Unresolved Childhood Trauma
- Unresolved Grief and Loss

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH CLIENT

1. What patterns do you see being repeated, generation after generation, in your family or in other families you know?
2. Does this exercise cause you to think of any of your own experiences in a different way? If so, what is the change?
3. Do you see patterns in your own life you want to avoid passing on to your children?
4. What new pattern would you want to replace an old pattern in your family and your life?
UNDERSTANDING FAMILY HISTORY

It's important to understand the role family history can play in the development of substance abuse or chemical dependence, both for your own recovery and to improve things for your family. Biological, psychological, and social factors combine in different ways for different people to influence the development of substance abuse. This exercise looks at one of these factors: the way social influences affect us.

1. Who did you see drinking or using in your family of origin? What age were you? What effects do you believe this had on you?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. What did you learn about alcohol or other drugs from your family of origin?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. What problems, if any, did your family have as a result of drinking or using (violence, divorce, financial problems, other worries, illegal activity)?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

4. What chemicals and how much were you or others in your family using?

____________________________________________________________________

5. What words best describe the typical atmosphere or mood in your family of origin?

____________________________________________________________________

6. Members of alcohol- or drug-using families often interact with each other in some common patterns. For each pattern listed here that you experienced, give an example from childhood and an example of how you are working to make positive changes in your family now.

Exercise I.4
Dishonesty/denial
Childhood example: _____________________________________________________
Working toward positive change: ___________________________________________

Breaking promises
Childhood example: _____________________________________________________
Working toward positive change: ___________________________________________

Isolating/withdrawing
Childhood example: _____________________________________________________
Working toward positive change: ___________________________________________

Emotional/physical/sexual abuse and neglect
Childhood example: _____________________________________________________
Working toward positive change: ___________________________________________

Influencing others to act in self-destructive ways
Childhood example: _____________________________________________________
Working toward positive change: ___________________________________________

Inappropriate role assignment (such as children taking care of adults)
Childhood example: _____________________________________________________
Working toward positive change: ___________________________________________

Taking responsibility for others/expecting others to take responsibility for you
Childhood example: _____________________________________________________
Working toward positive change: ___________________________________________

7. Are there any relationship patterns from your childhood family that you feel were good and want to pass on to your children? If so, what are they?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Exercise I.4
Exercise I.4

8. How does your family of origin still impact your use of alcohol or other drugs, ineffective or self-harming behavior, or recovery efforts?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

9. What questions do you want to ask the group or therapist about this topic in your next session?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Remember to bring completed work sheet to your next appointment.
Identifying Social/Cultural Influences and Pressures to Drink/Use

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. To increase the client’s understanding of pressures to drink or use so that he or she will be more capable of resisting these pressures.
2. To suggest that the client can take actions to reach the goal of abstinence, despite pressures from the social environment.

TYPES OF PROBLEMS THIS EXERCISE MAY BE MOST USEFUL FOR

• Blaming/Projection/Failure to Take Appropriate Responsibility
• Denial/Rationalization/Minimization of Substance-Abusing Behavior and/or Relapse Risk
• Inadequate Support Network
• Living Environment Deficiencies (Relapse Triggers, Lack of Emotional Support, etc.)
• Peer Group Negativity
• Spiritual Confusion
• Substance Abuse
• Substance Dependence
• Tendency to Repeated Relapse
• Treatment/Aftercare Noncompliance
• Value Conflicts

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH CLIENT

1. Role-play different pressure situations in individual sessions or groups.
2. What is the biggest obstacle for you in resisting pressure to return to using/drinking?
3. Rehearse what you will say to people who may pressure you if you encounter them.
IDENTIFYING SOCIAL/CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND PRESSURES TO DRINK/USE

Knowing how to identify pressures toward relapse, and knowing what to do and what not to do, is not only helpful but necessary to prevent returning to use of alcohol or other drugs. This knowledge will help you handle pressures you may have been unable to resist before. Some social and cultural pressures are easy to identify, though they may be either easy or hard to resist. This exercise will help you identify your personal pressures and develop a plan to cope with them.

1. Below are some sources of social or cultural pressures to drink or use. Please give an example of how each might be a source of social pressure to drink or use for you.
   a. Family members: _____________________________________________________
   b. Friends, peers: _______________________________________________________
   c. Recreational activities: ________________________________________________
   d. Celebrations (religious, cultural, family, etc.): ____________________________
   e. Work environment: ___________________________________________________

2. Identify one action you will take to resist each pressure you identified.
   a. Family members: _____________________________________________________
   b. Friends, peers: _______________________________________________________
   c. Recreational activities: ________________________________________________
   d. Celebrations: _________________________________________________________
   e. Work environment: ___________________________________________________

3. Mental rehearsal: Try to act these strategies out in your mind. Picture what you will be doing and saying. Then answer these questions.
   a. What problems did you foresee when you tried to imagine doing this? ________

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Exercise I.5

b. What went right? ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

c. What skills do you need to learn in order to succeed in resisting social pressures 
   to use? ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

Remember to bring completed work sheet to your next appointment.